September 5, 2003

Public Notice for 401 Certification

O'Neil Creek Bridge Replacement
WDID No. 1A03137WNSI

Siskiyou County

On July 21, 2003, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the California Department of Transportation, requesting a Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the replacement of two culverts with a single span bridge at O'Neil Creek Bridge location. O'Neil Creek Bridge is located near the town of Hamburg (Section 22, T46N, R11W, Hamburg Quadrangle) in Siskiyou County. The proposed bridge replacement will cause disturbances to O'Neil Creek in the Seiad Valley Hydrologic Subarea No. 105.33.

The applicant is proposing to replace two corrugated metal pipe culverts, which convey O'Neil Creek under Highway 96, with a reinforced, single span bridge crossing. The purpose of the project is to improve fish passage at O'Neil Creek Bridge, located approximately 3.5 miles west of the town of Hamburg.

O'Neil Creek currently flows under Highway 96 through a low flow (96-inch diameter) and high flow (60-inch diameter) culvert. Both culverts are believed to be impassable to juvenile salmonids and may be impassable for spawning-age salmon. Removal of the culverts will open approximately one mile of habitat to anadromous fish for juvenile rearing and possible spawning.

As part of the project, a temporary detour around O'Neil Creek Bridge will be constructed upstream of the existing culverts. The detour will require the removal of nine trees. The detour will consist of clean gravel and two culverts placed within the stream channel. Approximately 260 cubic yards of clean gravel will be placed within the channel, and a temporary retaining wall will be installed on the downstream side of the fill.

A temporary rock bag check dam will be placed upstream of the detour to divert the stream into the temporary culverts. The temporary culverts will convey the stream flow through the construction area and outlet downstream of the work area.

If groundwater is encountered during excavation for the new bridge footings it will be transferred to a settling basin. There is a distance of approximately 0-25 mile between the settling basin and the nearest watercourse. If groundwater from dewatering exceeds the capacity of the settling basin it will be pumped into a tank and used for dust abatement.

The applicant has proposed to mitigate for the project by planting approximately 360 square feet of stream bank with native riparian plants and planting upland areas with mixed conifers and hardwood saplings at a ratio of 3:1. The applicant will monitor for 75 % tree survival after three years. The applicant is incorporating into the project measures to minimize impacts to Federally threatened coho salmon and northern spotted owls. All work within the stream channel will be conducted between June and October 15th, while all tree removal will take place between August

31st and February 1st. Prior to beginning the project, a fisheries biologist will place a net upstream of the project site and re-located any stranded fish.

The applicant has applied for Nationwide Permit No. 23 from the United States Army Corps of Engineers, pursuant to the Clean Water Act, Section 404 and a Class 1 Categorical Exemption, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, has been issued. The applicant has applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (1601 Permit) from California Department of Fish and Game.

Construction is scheduled to take place between July and November 2004.

Staff is proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act Authority. In addition, staff will consider all comments received during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Miguel Villicana by phone at (707) 576-2347, or e-mail villm@rb1.swrcb.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

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